

MERCER MEADOWS

FEBRUARY 23, 2011 – PUBLIC MEETING



Prepared by: ETM ASSOCIATES, LLC

ETM - FIRM PROFILE

ETM ASSOCIATES, LLC, established in 1997, brings a wide range of professional, technical and entrepreneurial expertise to every project.

We are concerned with all aspects of public space. We see design, implementation, and ongoing management as a continuum of related professional activities.

Through application of our professional skills, we strive to improve the quality of the relationship between those responsible for public space users. To each project we bring a wide range of professional, technical, and entrepreneurial expertise, as well as extensive experience with public agencies, community leaders, and private institutions.

Above all, we bring to the design and management of public space, our commitment to providing solutions that best serve clients, strengthen communities, and create welcoming environments for all.

ETM ASSOCIATES, LLC is an internationally experienced and acclaimed consulting firm, specializing in the development of public space designs and master plans with proven experience in all aspects of public space design.



Our firm provides comprehensive landscape architecture and urban design services. We are skilled at working within the public process, producing innovative designs, workable details and construction support. Extensive experience with community leaders, public agencies and private institutions gives the firm the perspective to fashion successful designs that can be implemented.

PROJECT TEAM

ETM ASSOCIATES

PROJECT MANAGEMENT/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

212

SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING/GRAPHIC DESIGN

HUNTER RESEARCH

CULTURAL RESOURCE INVESTIGATION/INTERPRETATION

ENGINEERING & LAND PLANNING (ELP)

ENGINEERING SERVICES

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Mercer County acquired the open space known as Mercer County Park Northwest through several land purchases, most recently in 2001.

In recent past this open space was proposed as a golf course and a large scale housing development amongst other things.

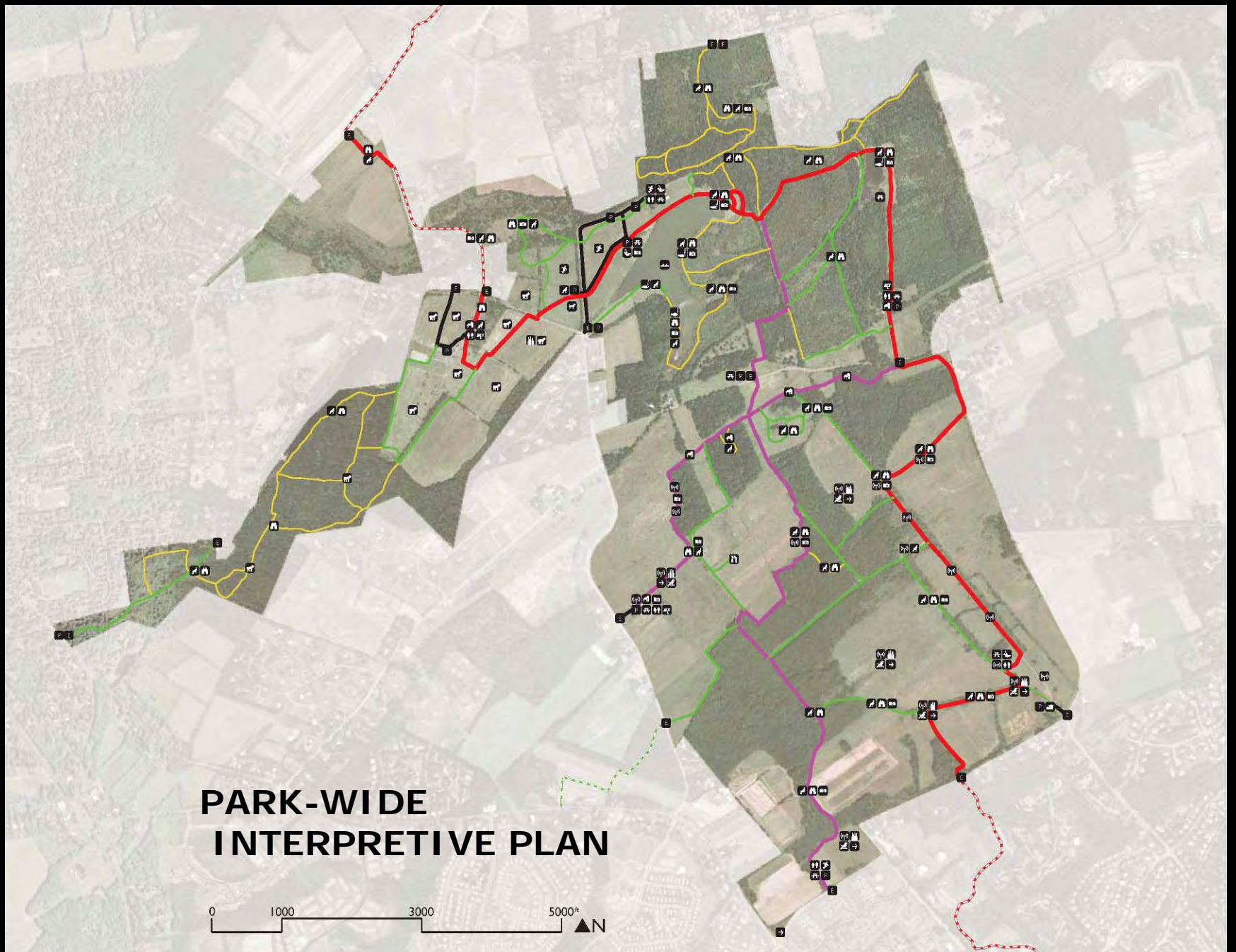
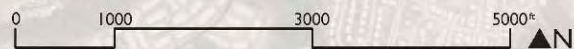
Recently Mercer County began investing in the development of this land as a community open space.

BUILDING ON A PARK



ETM Associates has been hired to build upon previous improvements and create an ecologically based community park.

PARK-WIDE INTERPRETIVE PLAN



PARK-WIDE DISTRICTS



Ecology



Rosedale



Equestrian



Farm History



Pole Farm

Park-wide Improvements



Interpretive Plan

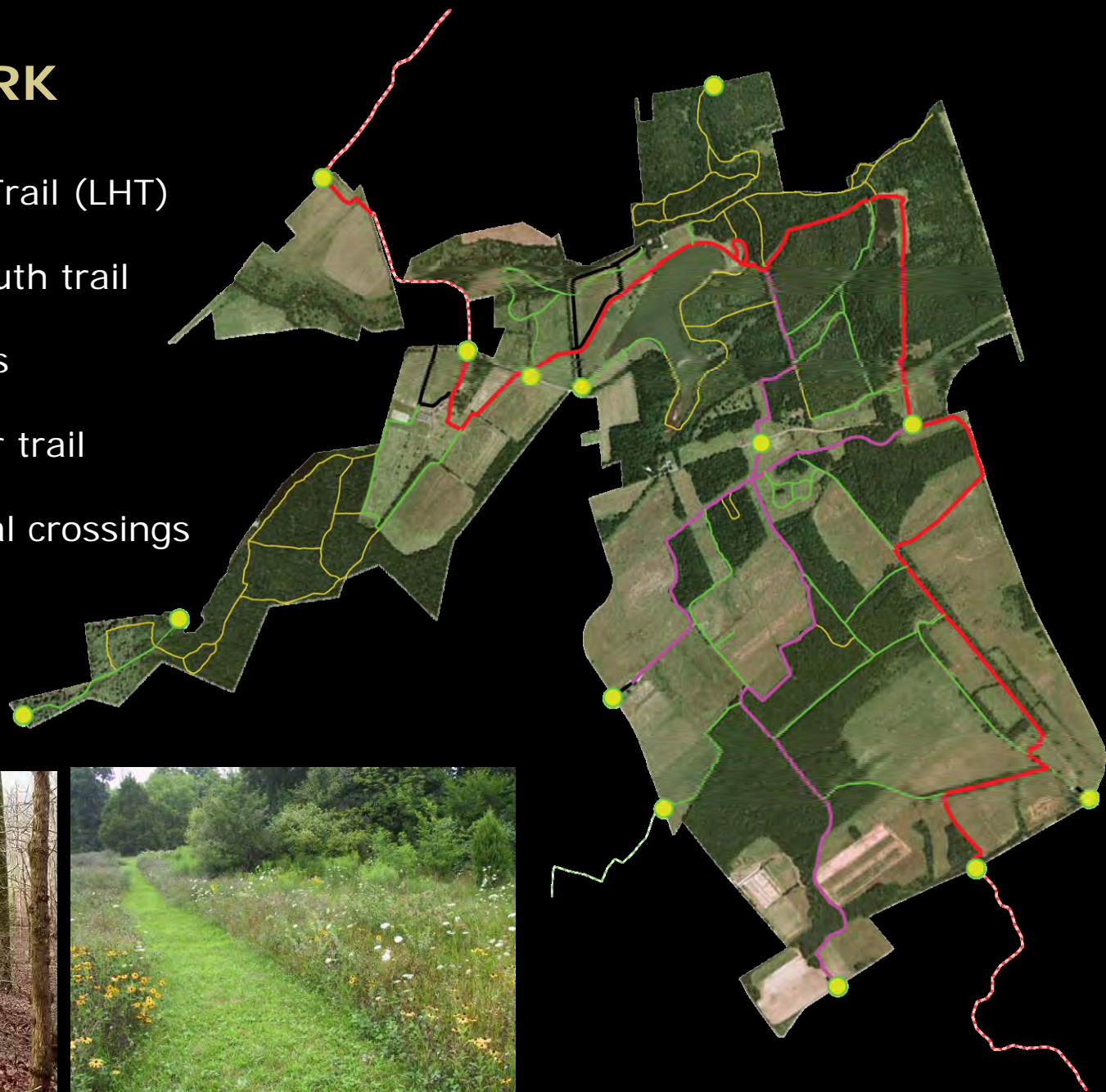
PARKING/VEHICULAR ENTRY

Improve and enhance all existing parking areas and construct a few additional small parking areas.








TRAIL NETWORK

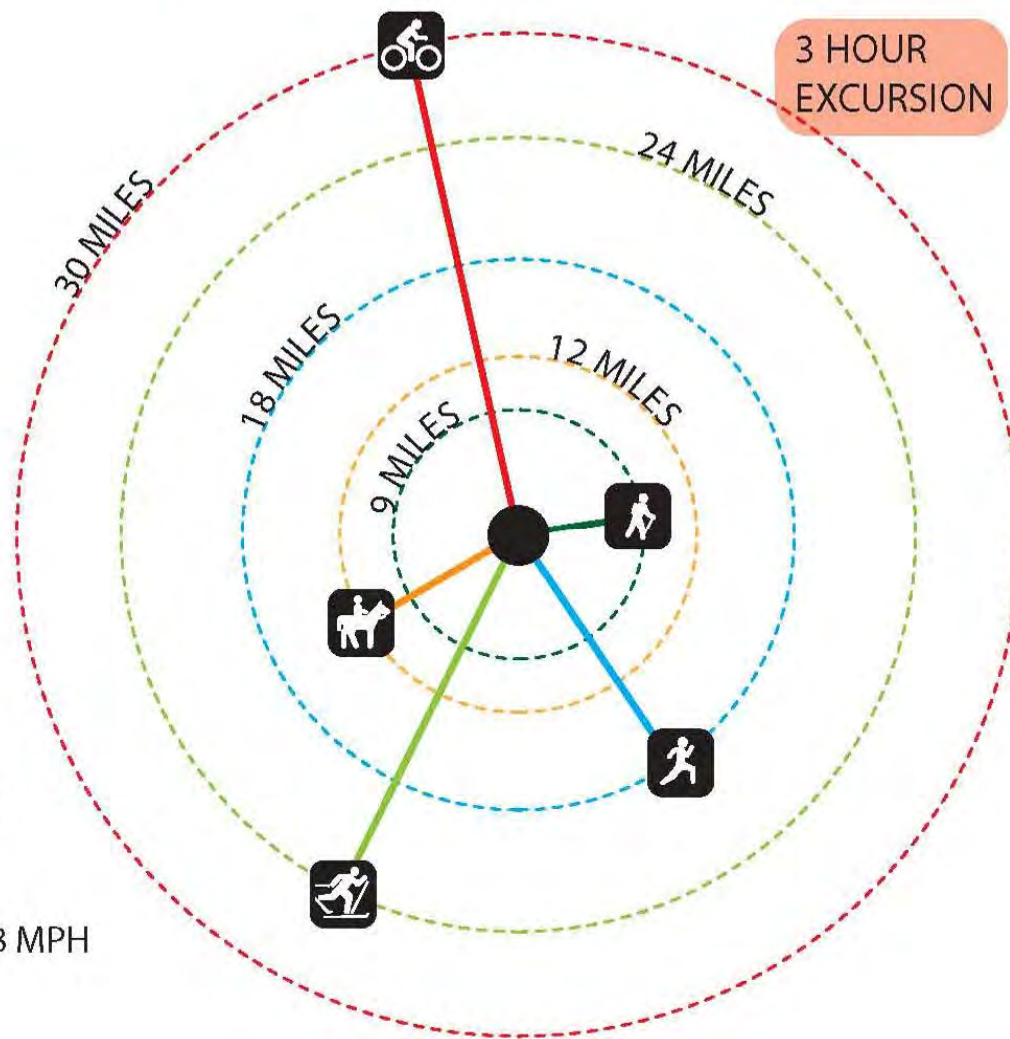
- Lawrence Hopewell Trail (LHT)
- Secondary North/South trail
- Tertiary mowed trails
- Twin Pines connector trail
- Trailheads with signal crossings



Time and Distance Study – Exploring a 1700 acre park

How far away is that?

-  Hiking - Avg. Speed - 3 MPH
-  Biking - Avg. Speed - 10 MPH
-  Jogging - Avg. Speed - 6 MPH
-  Horseback - Avg. Speed - 4 MPH
-  X Country Skiing - Avg. Speed - 8 MPH

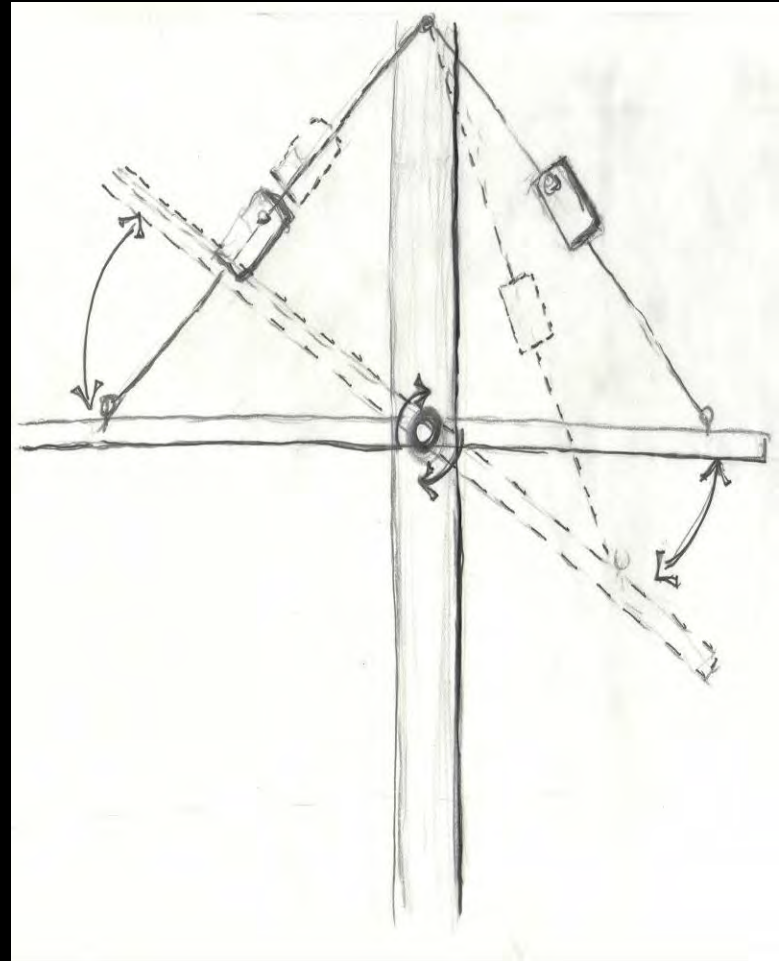


REST AREAS

Several rest areas will be located at key points throughout the park. These rest areas will mostly consist of small trail side stops with several medium to large picnic and interpretive areas.



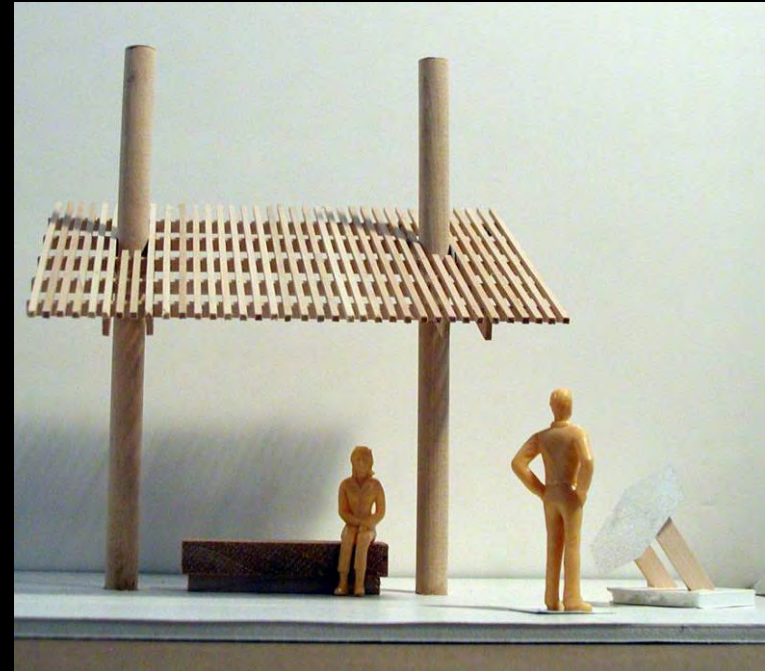
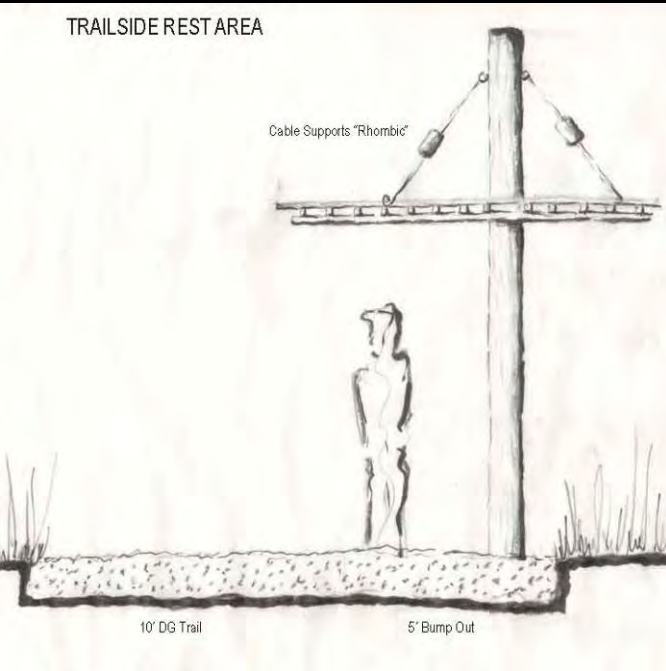
Rest Areas – Inspiration



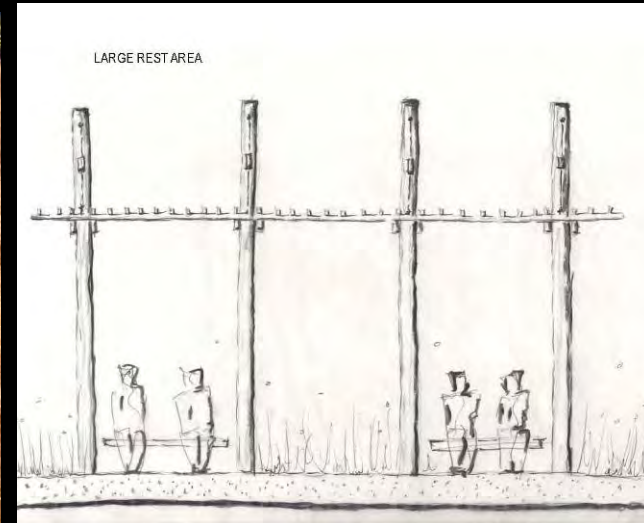
A simple wooden structure that borrows design elements from the “pole farm” landscape.

Rest Areas – Trailside Shade Structure

TRAILSIDE REST AREA



Rest Areas – Picnic Area Shade Structure



A larger structure to be used at a few select picnic areas throughout Mercer Meadows.

Rest Areas – Hunt House Rest Area



This unique shade structure be located at the Hunt House rest area which is nearing completion as the new Park Commission headquarters.

Rest Areas – Waterless Restrooms



Solar powered waterless restrooms will be placed at several strategic locations throughout the park. Artistic shells will blend the restrooms in with the surrounding landscape.

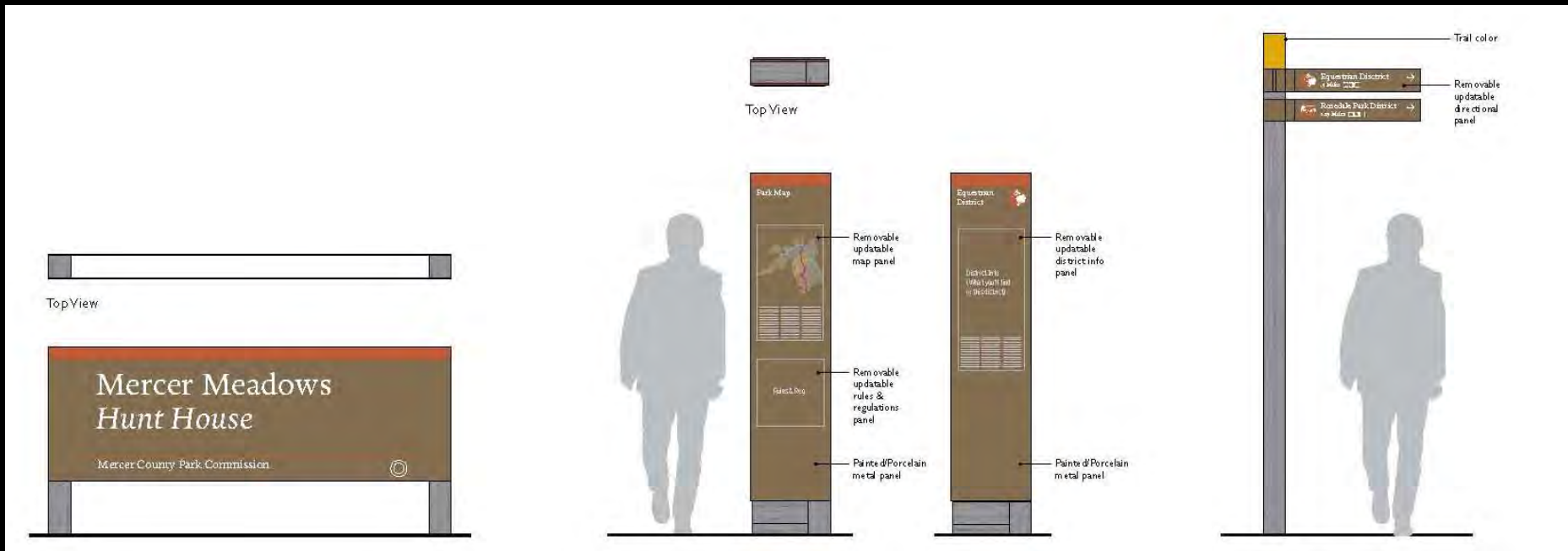


SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING



Sign Type Family

A “family” of custom sign types has been designed for use throughout Mercer Meadows. Park IDs, pedestrian directional signs, interpretive panels, and park directories will clearly define the park and promote confident park usage.

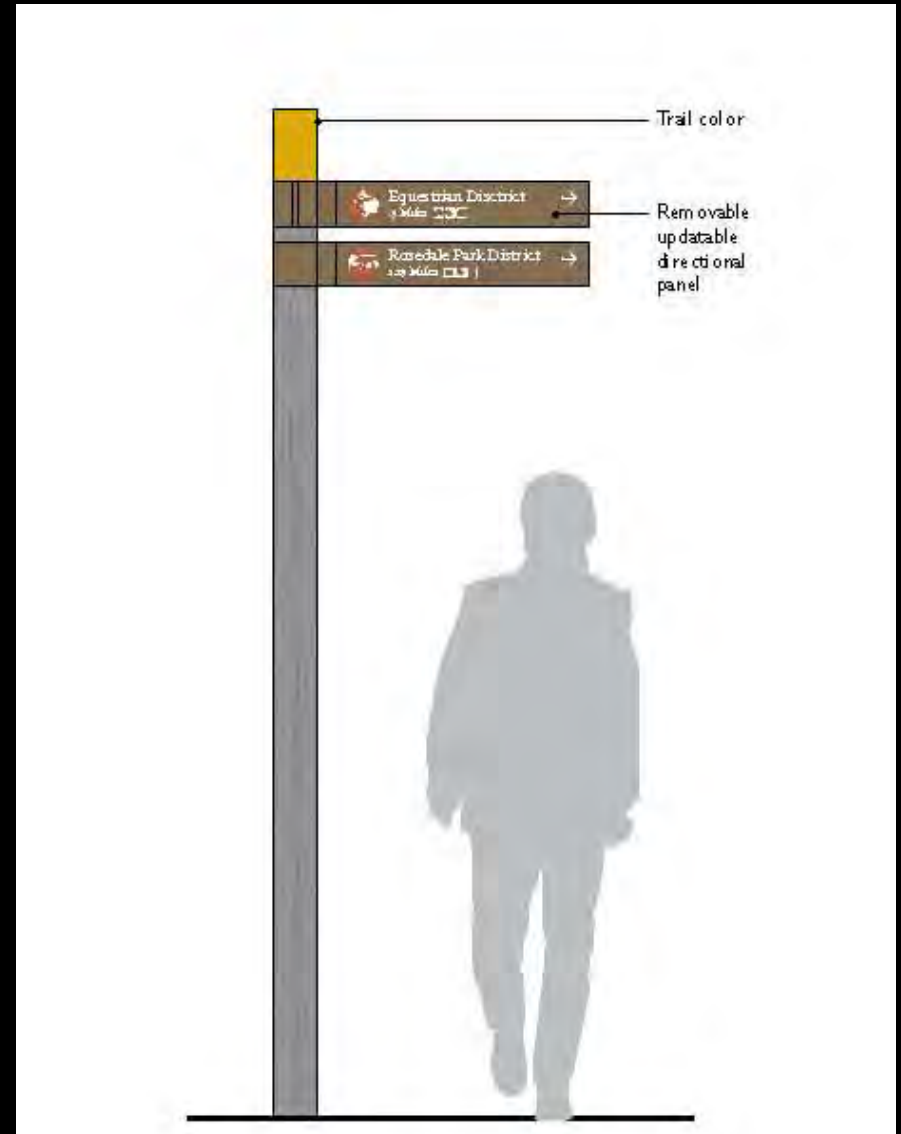


Pedestrian Wayfinding

Pedestrian directional signs will provide important information to guide visitors from one destination to another.

Destinations and distances will be indicated on the signs.

Park users won't have to wonder "How far is it to the Hunt House?".



Special Interpretive Signage

Additionally, several unique interpretive information stations will be included throughout Mercer Meadows.

These signs will inform visitors in new interactive ways.



Special Interpretive Signage

Mercer County Park Northwest Flickr Photos



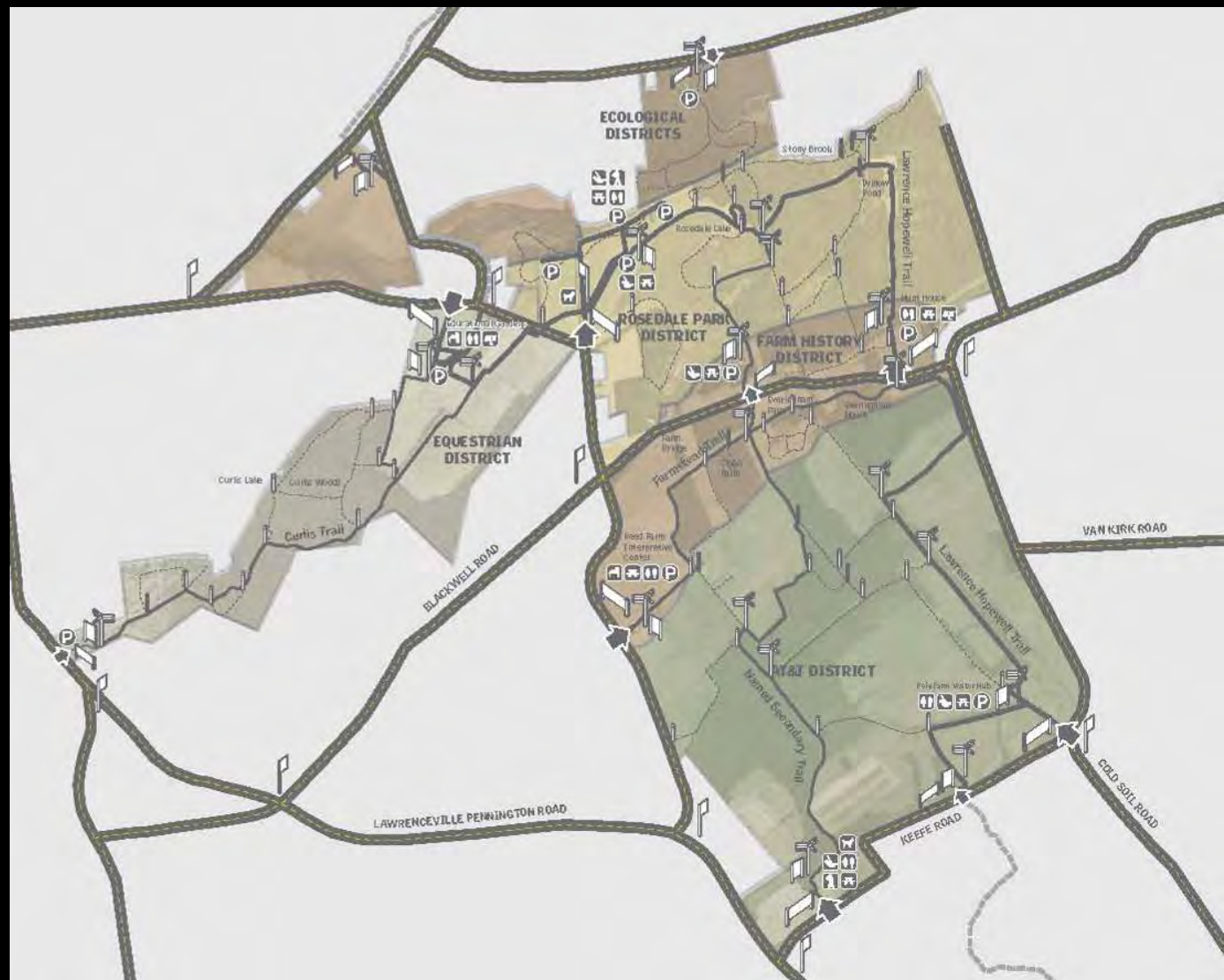
Wildlife Interpretive - Incorporate park user's photos and possibly birdsong player



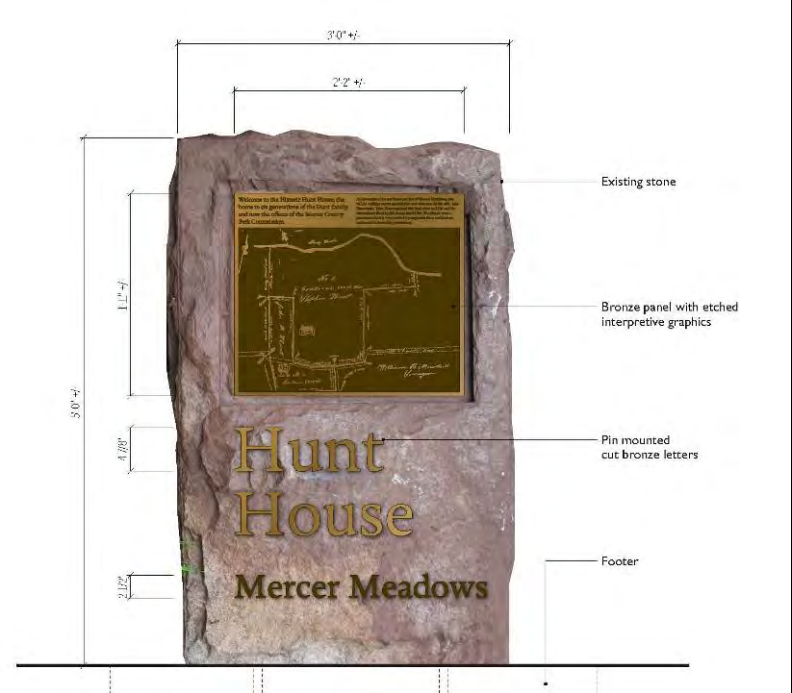
Birdsong Book - Press number of bird and hear it's song



Sign locations



Hunt House – Interpretive Signage



The Historic Hunt House

Welcome to the Historic Hunt House, the home to six generations of the Hunt family, and now the offices of the Mercer County Park Commission.

As you explore the northeast section of Mercer Meadows, you will be walking across ground that was once part of the 200+ acre Hunt farm. John Hunt acquired this land prior to 1749 and his descendants lived in this house until 1918. The Hunts were a prominent family who worked a prosperous farm and took an active role in township governance.

The Hunt House Tells a Story

If you look carefully, you'll see that the Hunt House was built in three sections. The oldest center section was built prior to 1742 and has a hall-and-parlor form, with two rooms downstairs and two upstairs.

The house was enlarged as the Hunts prospered and their tastes changed. The eight-room eastern section (closest to the 1,817 Trail) was built in the 1790s. This section is the "grandest" with some rooms having fancy wood millwork. About 1820, when the west wing was added, the Hunt farm was the second wealthiest farm in Hopewell Township.

1817 Trail
1817 Trail
1817 Trail



The Hunts, like many Hopewell farmers, owned slaves. Noah Hunt had five slaves when he died in 1806. Twenty-five years later, Ruth, the widow of Noah's son Stephen, lived on the farm with eleven "free-colored" people. It seems likely that the Hunts had manipulated the slaves, and that some of them lived in the large house with Ruth, who died in 1837 without children. Her cousin Asa Hunt inherited the farm. Although we know very little about the Hunt family's personal beliefs toward slavery, legend has it that the Hunt House was a stop on the underground railroad.

In 1832, Asa Hunt died, leaving the farm to his two sons, Stephen and John. This map was drawn by the county court to show how the two sons should divide the property. Stephen received the larger 260-acre parcel and his father's house, shown center. John received a 60-acre parcel and a house on the south side of Blackwell Road. Why the unequal division? If farms were divided equally generation after generation, they would have become too small to support a family. Passing the farm intact to the next generation was essential, but it could cause tension within.

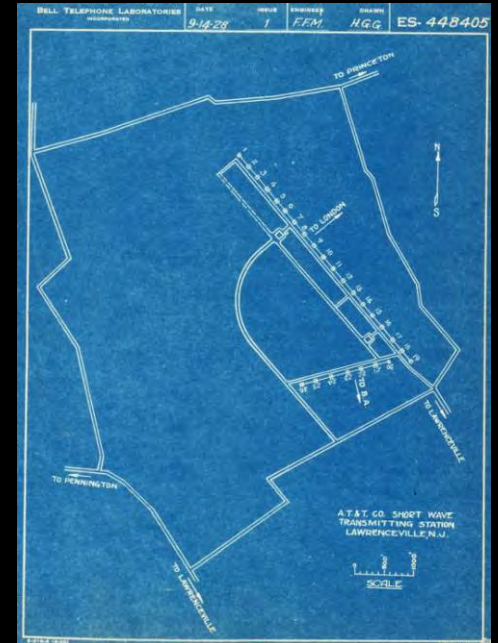


Hunt House Restoration

In 1969, Mercer County purchased the Hunt farm as part of Rosedale Park, responding to the community's strong desire to maintain open space. In 2001, the Park Commission, aided by a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust, completed a preservation study, discovering that the by then rundown house was structurally sound. The decision was made to restore the house for use as the Park Commission's offices. In 2009, construction began with funds from the Trust and the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Fund.

The Hunt House is listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places because of its importance as one of our community's oldest surviving colonial farmhouses. This view shows the house as it appeared in 1967, prior to restoration.

HISTORIC INVESTIGATION AND INTERPRETATION



Historic Resources Investigation



Hunter Research has unfolded a rich farming and communications history within the park boundaries. This vital research has greatly guided the design and interpretation within Mercer Meadows.

ECOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

A park-wide ecological management program will be implemented.

Eco-interpretive “features” will be located throughout the park which highlight habitats and convey ecological awareness with park visitors.



Ecological Management – Large-scale Rain Garden



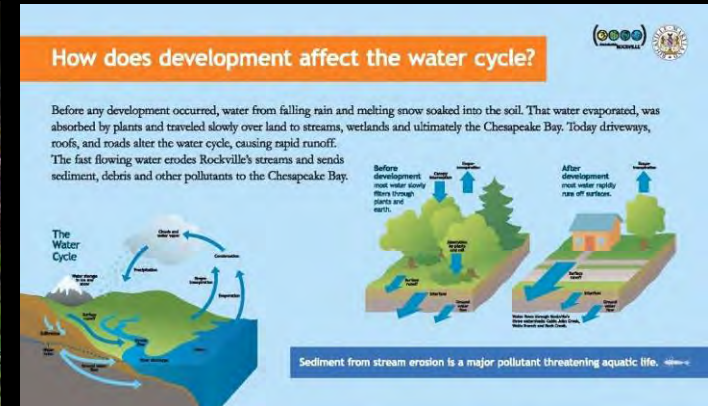
A win-win-win situation. Constructing a large rain garden to manage stormwater is an aesthetically appealing and cost effective management strategy that also provides environmental services and habitat for resident wildlife.

Ecological Management – Old Field Habitat



Early successional habitats are of concern because many species that depend on these habitats are experiencing population declines throughout New Jersey due to changes in land use.

Ecological Management – Vernal Pool Enhancement



Within Mercer Meadows there are several vernal pools that are great candidates for enhancement. The goal is to ensure proper shading, hydrology and structure of the pool itself.

Ecological Management – Invasive Species Management



Like much open space, Mercer Meadows is infected with invasive plant species. Invasive species management is underway.

Ecological Management – Grassland Management



The Park Commission follows a mowing pattern to maintain fields in different stages of succession. Our mowing management practices will continue with minor improvements.

Ecological Management – Forest De-fragmentation



Historical uses of Mercer Meadows fragmented many of the woodlands within the park. Creating properly designed trails and improving forest understory will restore the park's wooded areas.

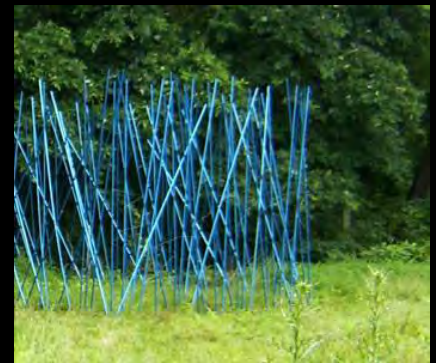
ECOLOGICAL INTERPRETIVE FEATURES

Ecological Features - LHT Wildlife Blind



This structure, nestled in the tree row along the LHT, will allow park visitors better views of Mercer Meadow's wildlife. Inside, interpretive panels will illustrate the wildlife species people can expect to see.

Ecological Features – Forest Understory Enclosures



These enclosures will be located along the North South Trail in the Pole Farm District; each enclosure will allow wildflowers, shrubs and small trees to grow without being impacted by heavy deer browse.

Ecological Features - Bird Observation Tower



The Pole Farm is a popular bird watching destination. The addition of an observation tower will allow all visitors a bird's eye view of the vibrant fields.

Ecological Features - Insect Education Walk



With some small scale improvements, this field – across from Blackwell Road – will become a haven for sun-loving insects. A small trail loop will allow park visitors up-close encounters with butterflies, crickets, bugs and spiders.

PARK FEATURES



SOUTHEAST CORNER PARK ENTRY AND POLE FARM INTERPRETIVE HUB



The large antennas which once dominated this landscape are long gone, yet many artifacts remain including the AT&T Communications Building footprint. The old building footprint will now serve as the site of the Pole Farm interpretive Hub. The LHT will bring park visitors right to it.

Pole Farm Interpretive Hub



This interpretive diorama will teach visitors of the size and scale of the once towering antennas.



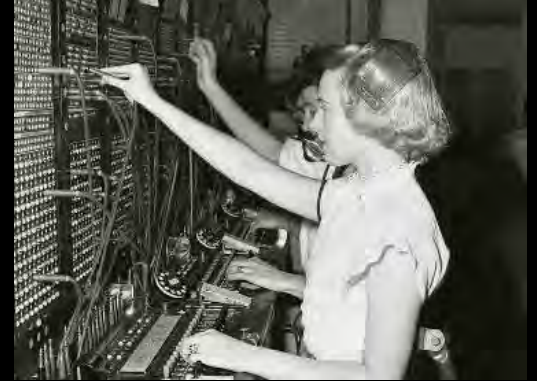
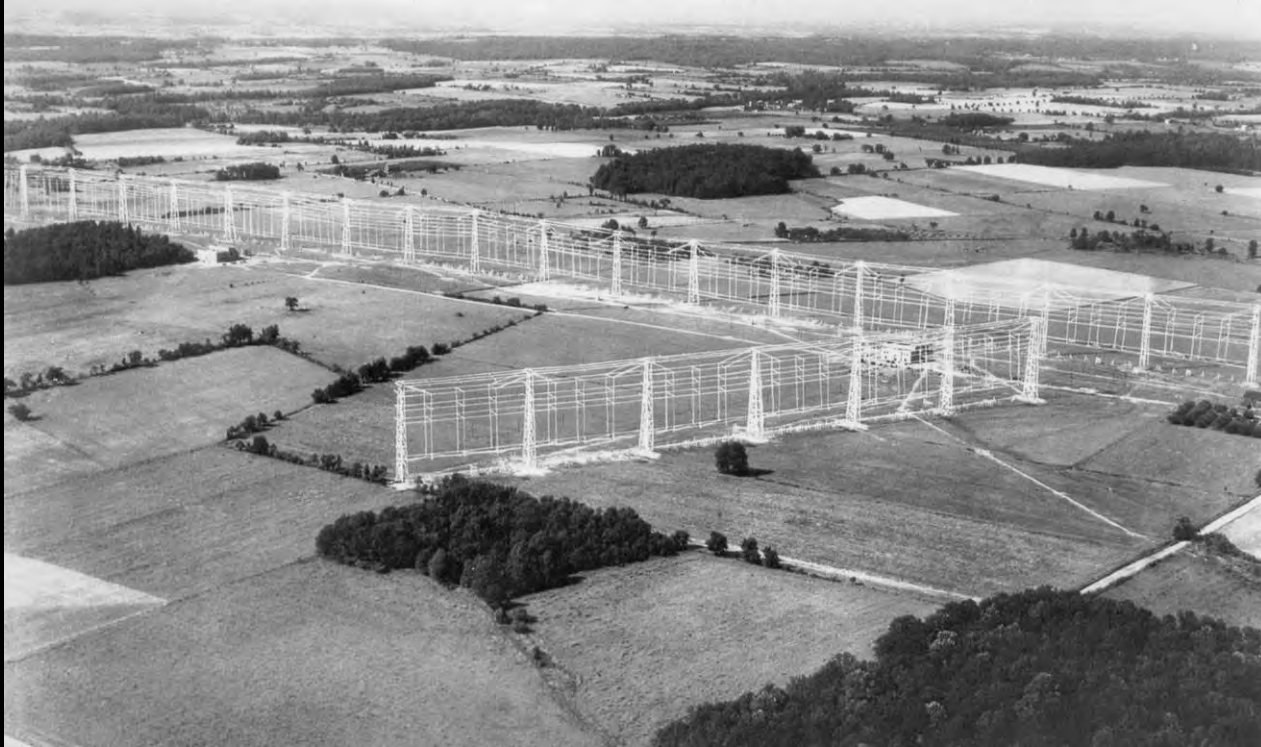
Southwest Corner "Toe" Parking and Trailhead



Buenos Aires Rhombic Antenna Interpretation



AT&T array interpretation



Park visitors can use their cell phones to learn about international communications in the early to mid 20th century.

Honolulu Rhombic Antenna interpretation



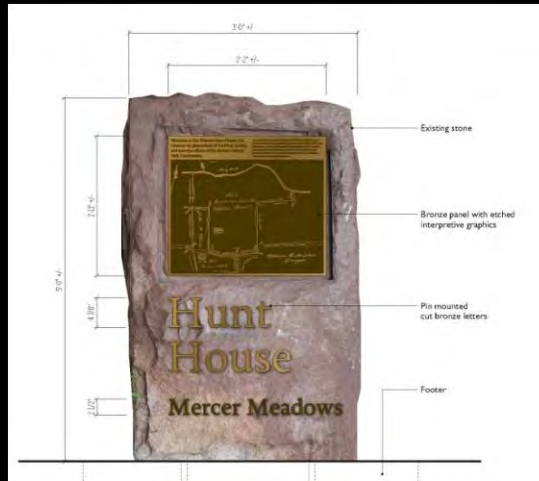
The Honolulu Rhombic Antenna once stood in this location. An installation of artistic poles will now rise out of the grassland and serve as bird habitats.

Astronomy viewing area near Reed Farm



Hunt House – Park Commission Headquarters

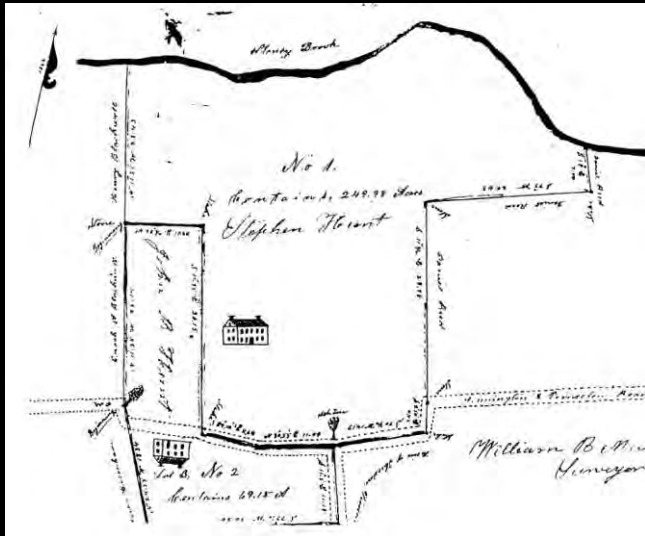
The historic Hunt House will become a central point within Mercer Meadows as the new Park Commission offices. The LHT and entry drive bring visitors right into the “back door” of Rosedale Park.



A new visitor parking area has already been installed which will bring many park users to this area.

Historic Farm Resource Investigation

Hunter Research investigated the farming history within the park and discovered a rich past spanning 3 centuries.



Several historic farms were identified. Several local families are still actively farming these lands.

FARM HISTORY TRAIL

Connecting the Hunt House to the Reed Farmstead



Slack Farm Walk



Walk above the remains of the old Slack family Bank Barn.

Rosedale Park "Expansion"

The park can be viewed by visitors as a unified space by simply clearing the area between Rosedale Park and the Equestrian center.



Existing



Rosedale expansion



Unified parkland

Rosedale Park "Expansion" – Making more of the park usable

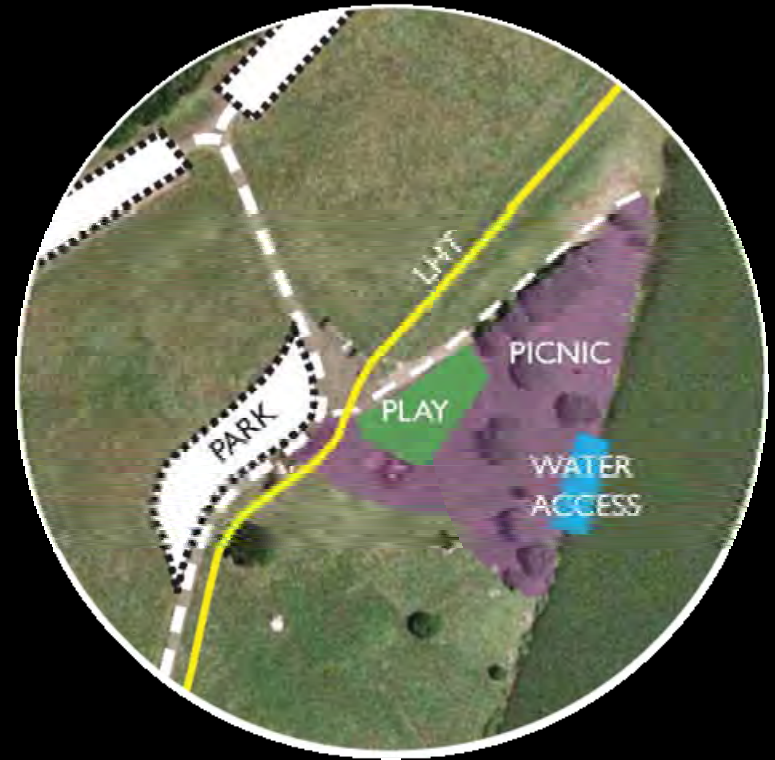


Simple enhancements within Rosedale Park will update and strengthen an already active park area.

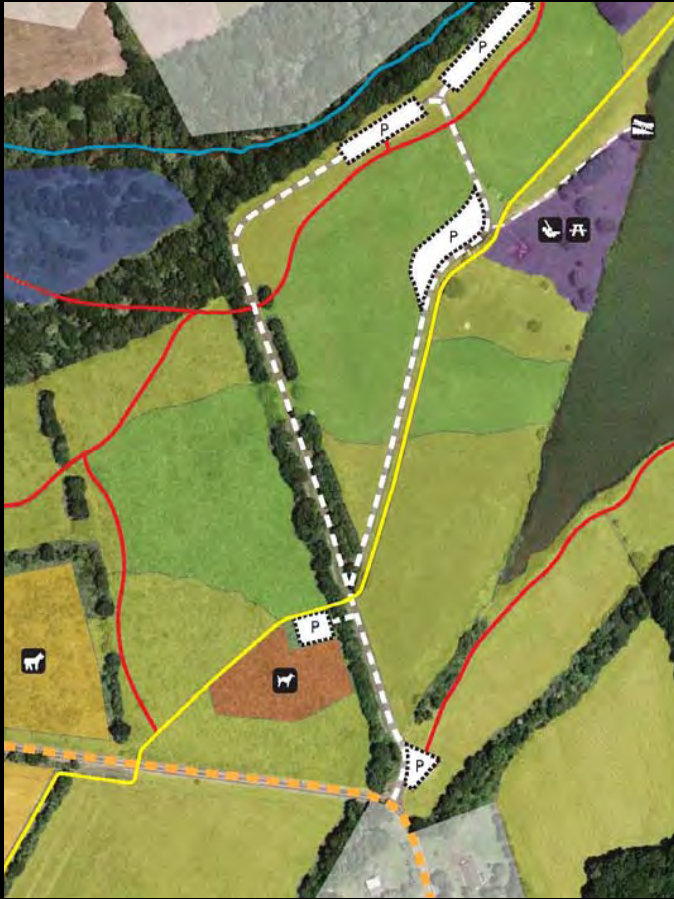
Rosedale Enhanced Picnic Area

Updated amenities in Rosedale Park will include:

- Parking
- Picnic areas
- Children's play
- Enhanced water access
- Trail links



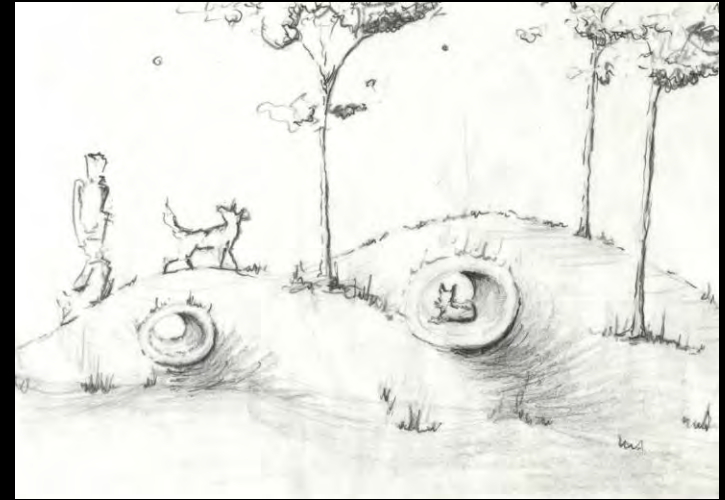
Off-Leash Dog Area



An off-leash dog area will define the west edge of the Rosedale District.

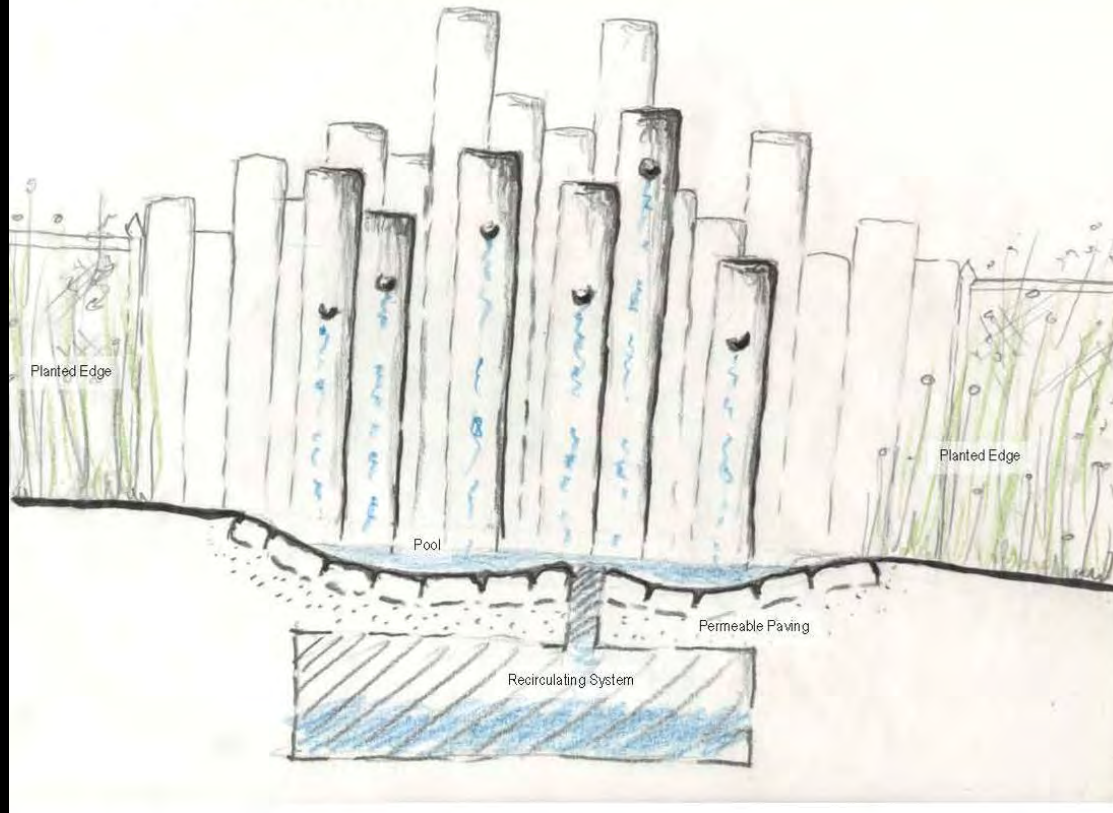
The dog area will provide features including a custom water feature and a landform play area with tunnels.

Off-Leash Dog Area – Landforms

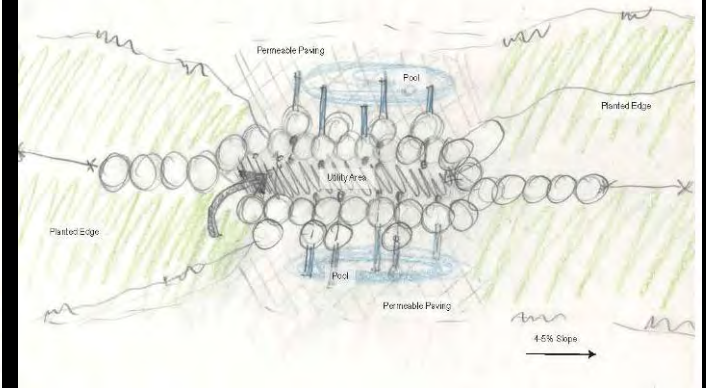


Off-Leash Dog Area – Water Feature

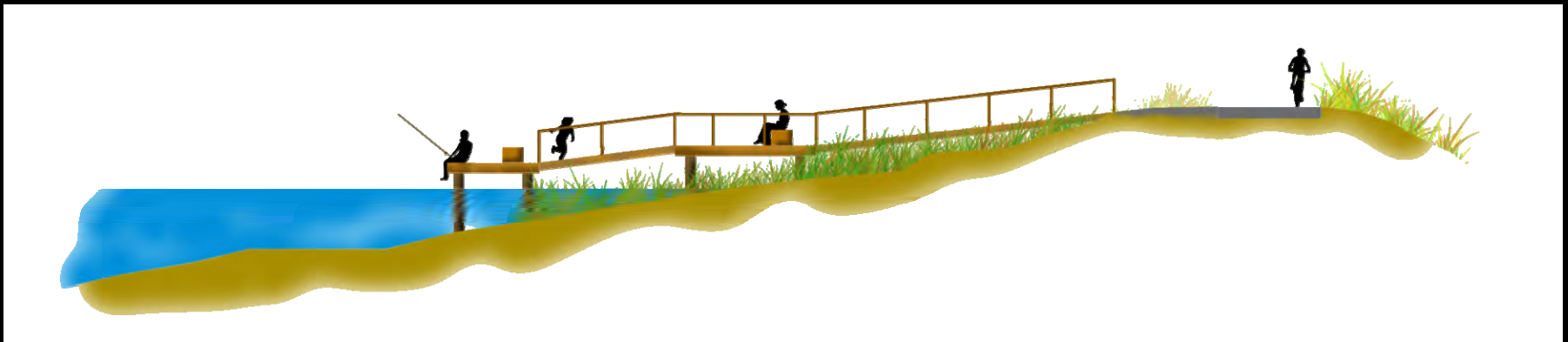
WATER FEATURE - SECTION



WATER FEATURE - PLAN



Rosedale Lake East Dock

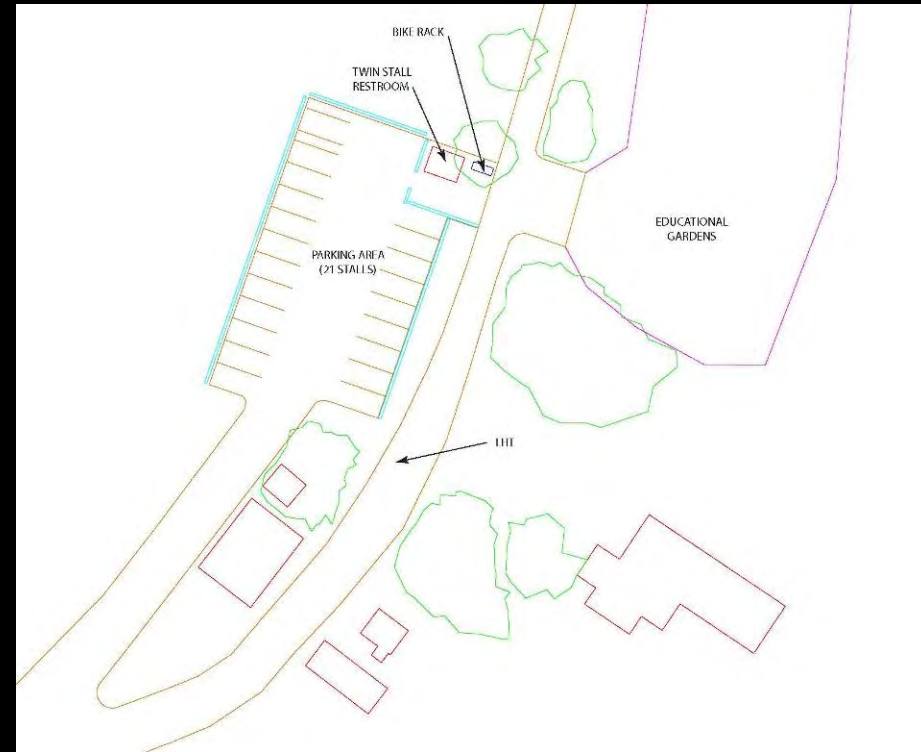
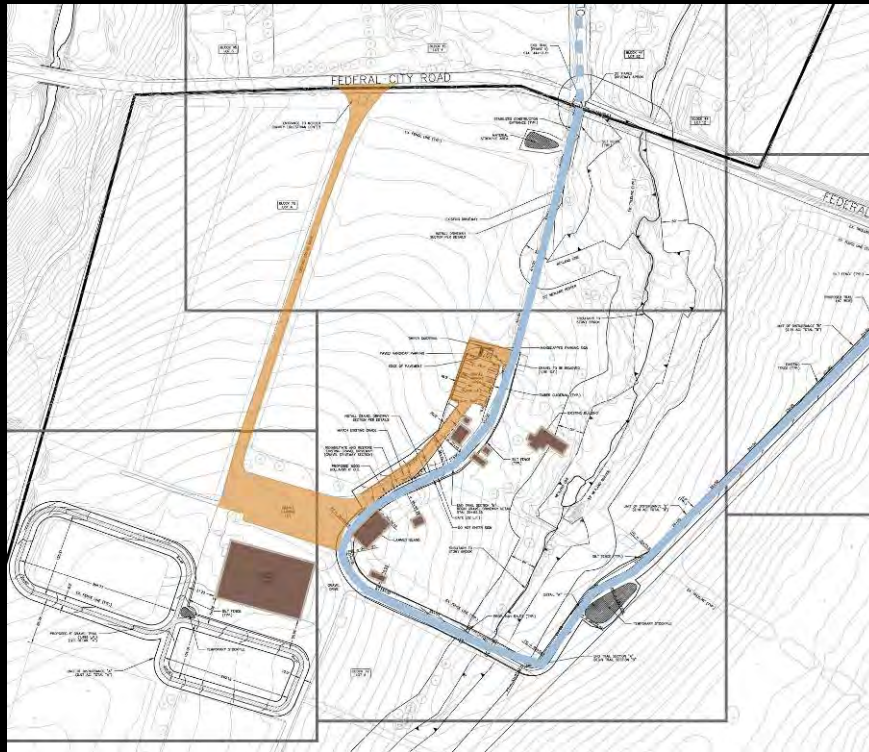


Willow Pond Improvements



Willow Pond will become an important stop along the LHT.

Equestrian Center Entry and Parking



The Equestrian Center entry and parking areas will be modified to allow safe, well defined access to pedestrians and auto drivers.

Curlis Woods West Parking



Downtown Pennington is just down the road.

Wetland Boardwalk Bird Blind



A unique habitat walk that is easily accessed from Rosedale Park.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION – SHORT TERM

In order to devise a realistic approach to design implementation we divided the park-wide interpretive plan into 3 separate phases.

Phase one was carefully thought out to provide Mercer Meadows with the greatest initial impact.

Examples of Phase one improvements include:

- **Construction of LHT trail**
- **Installation of Secondary North/South Trail**
- **Wayfinding, interpretive, and park signage**
- **Improved parking**
- **Restrooms**
- **Rosedale Park enhancements (docks, playground, picnic)**
- **Install shade structures and rest areas**
- **Design and construct interpretive Hub**
- **Hunt House Site Improvements**
- **Install astronomy area**
- **Ecological Management and site prep work underway**
- **Historic interpretive elements**
- **Off-leash Dog Area**
- **Ecological interpretive features**